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Testimony Regarding the Governor's Budget Proposal on Education
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Members of the Appropriations Committee, Sen. Formica, Sen. Osten, Representative Walker and Representative Ziobron, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My name is Jennifer Alexander, I am the CEO of ConnCAN, a statewide non-profit organization that has spent the last decade fighting to ensure that all kids in Connecticut have access to a great public education.

Governor Malloy's budget offered several proposed changes to how our state would fund our public education system. We applaud the governor for taking the necessary and long-overdue steps to fix our broken school funding system and act on this important issue now, rather than wait for the courts to decide the matter.

As we all know, the current Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula is no longer being followed and no longer works for our towns, schools or kids. Our school funding system is illogical, unsustainable and unfair. Without a consistent and fair funding formula--without a real formula at all--we fund students at least 10 different ways that are disconnected from students' learning needs. The end result of this tangled web is a systematic disadvantaging of students and communities with the greatest need.

We are encouraged by some elements of the Governor's proposed budget that are intended to direct additional resources to students with the greatest learning needs. However, we think the proposed budget proposal falls short of the comprehensive fix that is needed to set our students and state up for success. While it does offer weights for students in poverty, as measured by Husky A, it does not include weights for other

types of student need, including English Language Learners. While we understand that communities need flexibility in how to allocate scarce resources, it offers potential flexibility around the minimum budget requirement (MBR) could result in dollars being directed away from the classroom in our most vulnerable communities. It also leaves schools of choice out of the equation and continues to treat public school students differently based on the type of school they attend. It will not fund children across all our public schools based on their learning needs. Instead the proposed system, perpetuates the current tangled web of funding for public school students and leaves Connecticut of sync with how other states fund schools of choice.

A look at Connecticut history, shows that the opportunity to enact a new education funding formula happens once every 25 years, at best. We must get this right, this year, to set our students and our state up for success for the next quarter of a century. That means a single funding formula, based on student learning needs, that is applied consistently across all types of schools. We need a formula that puts students at the center to give every child an opportunity to receive the quality education they need and deserve.

We look forward to working with you, members of the General Assembly, and the Governor to adopt a fair, predictable and sustainable school funding formula this legislative session.

Thank you.